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ANTY 336.01: Myth, Ritual and Religion

G. G. Weix
University of Montana - Missoula

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Description: Theories and practices concerning supernatural phenomena found among non-literate peoples throughout the world. Writing Approved for General Education.


Learning Objectives:
1) To gain a comparative perspective on world religions and also on indigenous cosmological traditions, i.e. 'an anthropological approach' to the study of religion.
2) To use descriptive and analytic vocabulary in the study of myth, ritual and religious ideas and practices, and related application in the medical anthropology of health and well-being.
3) To demonstrate writing skills which meet, or exceed standards for a Writing Approved class.

Course Requirements: Cell phones and other electronic devices should be turned off for the duration of class. Please conduct class related email communication through UM account. Students must comply with the Student Conduct Code http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student Conduct.php in all course matters.

Grading criteria: Grades are based on performance and points earned when a student
1) attends all classes (as documented by informal writing assignments) 40 points
2) completes 13 objective quizzes based on assigned readings 130 points
3) writes two formal writing assignments* 200 points
4) revises and resubmit one essay 30 points
5) completes final exam (objective and short essay questions) 100 points
Total possible: 500 points

Grades are based on points assigned according to the following percentages: A 90-100%, B 80-89%, C 70-79%, D 60-69%. Below 60% F. +/- grading is at the discretion of the instructor.

*Formal writing assignments must be 6-8 pages excluding endnotes and bibliography, typed, double-spaced, and proofread, in 12-point Times New Roman with 1-inch margins. Citation should follow the American Anthropological Association style guide http://aaanet.org/publications/styleguide/pdfParagraph structure must include an introduction, body and conclusion in development of an argument, and appropriate use of evidence to support the author's views, as well as to refute contrary views. The essay must identify a clear purpose, audience or genre. The instructor will provide summary feedback and grade based on four criteria: clarity of communication, development of ideas, identification of purpose and audience, and use of evidence. At least one formal writing assignment will be revised and resubmitted for a final grade.
**Accessibility:** University policy states that it is the responsibility of students with documented disabilities to contact instructors during the first week of the semester to discuss appropriate accommodations to ensure equity in grading, classroom experiences, and outside assignments. The instructor will work with the student and the staff of the Disability Services for Students (DSS) to arrange accommodations. Students should contact DSS (243.2373, Lommasson Center 154) for more information.

A web-based supplement for this class is available on Moodle: [http://umonline.umt.edu/](http://umonline.umt.edu/). Technical support is provided at: [http://umonline.umt.edu/techsupport/helpdesk.aspx](http://umonline.umt.edu/techsupport/helpdesk.aspx). This syllabus provides a general plan for the course. If deviations are necessary they will be announced in class.

**SYLLABUS**

**Week One: What is myth, and why is it significant in the comparative study of religion?**
- Aug. 26 Introduction and Pretest
  - READ: Bowen, Chapter 1
- Aug. 28 Concepts: Culture, Society and Religion
  - Optional read: Bessac, preface
- Aug. 30 Studying Religion through Practice: Bowen’s approach and one myth

**Week Two: Theories of Religion**
- Sept. 2 HOLIDAY no class
  - READ: Bowen, Chapter 2
  - Optional read: Bessac, chap. 1
- Sept. 4 World Religions
- Sept. 6 The Twin Transformations of “Religion” in state societies

**Week Three: State Religion**
- Sept. 9 Domains and Boundaries of Religion
- Sept. 11 State Religion in Japan and in the U.S.
- Sept. 13 Indigenous religious traditions

**Week Four: How is ritual central to anthropology and the study of religion?**
- Sept. 16 Rituals of Transition
  - READ: Bowen Chapter 4
  - Optional read: Bessac, chap. 3
- Sept. 18 Pilgrimage to Mecca
- Sept. 20 Life and Death

**Week Five: Medical Anthropology**
- Sept. 23 Health and Healing
  - READ: Bowen Chapter 5
  - Optional read: Bessac, chap. 4
- Sept. 25 Magic and Science
- Sept. 27 Prayer

**Week Six: Sorcery, Witchcraft and Modernity**
- Sept. 30 Sorcery and Witchcraft
  - READ: Bowen, Chapter 6
  - Optional read: Bessac, chap 5
- Oct. 2 Witches in Africa, Southeast Asia, and the U.S.

  **First Essay due Oct. 4th**
Week Seven: Worship, Hierarchy and Conflict
Oct. 7 Sacrifice  
READ: Bowen, Chapter 7  Optional read: Bessac, chap. 6
Oct. 9 Violence
Oct. 11 Conflict and Community: Hindus and Muslims in India

Week Eight: Imagery and Faith
Oct. 14 Relics and Images  
READ: Bowen, Chapter 8  Optional read: Bessac, chap. 6
Oct. 16 Gender and Fetish
Oct. 18 European Colonialism

Week Nine: Transatlantic Religion
Oct. 21 Pilgrimage  
READ: Bowen, Chapter 9
Oct. 23 Trance
Oct. 25 Shamans

Week Ten: Boundaries and Selves
Oct. 28 Taboo  
READ: Bowen, Chapter 10
Oct. 30 Orthodoxy
Nov. 1 Day of the Dead

Week Eleven: Speech and Grace
Nov. 4 Scripture and Testament  
READ: Bowen, Chapter 11
Nov. 6 Charisma
Nov. 8 Conversion  
Second Essay due Nov. 8th

Week Twelve: New Religious Movements
Nov. 11 Holiday no class  
READ: Bowen, Chapter 12
Nov. 13 Cults
Nov. 15 Revitalization Movements

Week Thirteen: Revelation and Authority
Nov. 18 Divination and Prophecy  
READ: Bowen, Chapter 13
Nov. 20 Revelation and Authority
Nov. 22 Writing Revisions Discussion

Week Fourteen: Virtual Religion
Nov. 25 Virtual Religions  
READ: Bowen, Chapter 14  Revisions due Nov. 25th
Nov. 27 Travel Day No class
Nov. 29 Holiday No class

Week Fifteen: Secularism
Dec. 2 Secularism  
READ: Bowen, Chapter 15 (Chapter 16 optional)
Dec. 4 Indigenous Others
Dec. 6 Conclusion and Evaluation

Final Exam: Tuesday, Dec. 10th 8:00-10:00 A.M.
Briefly define the following terms:

- ancestor _________________________
- animism _________________________
- cult ____________________________
- divination ______________________
- magic __________________________
- myth ___________________________
- offering _________________________
- pilgrimage ______________________
- ritual __________________________
- sacred __________________________
- sacrifice _________________________
- shaman __________________________
- taboo ____________________________
- trance ___________________________
- witchcraft ________________________

Respond to ONE of the following questions in a paragraph.
1. What distinguishes world religions from indigenous cosmological traditions?
2. What is the relationship of myth and ritual, according to anthropology?
3. Debate the proposition: religion is a cultural universal across societies.